

Message

From: Szaro, Deb [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=2A189E7C928E4EB3930E29543CAD5E5D-SZARO, DEB]
Sent: 12/11/2020 1:34:45 PM
To: Deegan, Dave [Deegan.Dave@epa.gov]
CC: Gutro, Doug [Gutro.Doug@epa.gov]; Lindsay, Jane [lindsay.jane@epa.gov]; Norcross, Jeffrey [Norcross.Jeffrey@epa.gov]; Senn, John [Senn.John@epa.gov]; Johnson, Arthur [Johnson.Arthur@epa.gov]; Grazick, Jason [Grazick.Jason@epa.gov]
Subject: Re: NPR story on federal hiring/workforce

Thanks Dave.

Sent from my iPhone

On Dec 11, 2020, at 8:31 AM, Deegan, Dave <Deegan.Dave@epa.gov> wrote:

No EPA content, I just thought you might be interested in this.

DD

Morale Down, Federal Workforce Gets Ready For A New Boss

December 11, 2020

- <!--[if !supportLists]--><![endif]-->[Brian Naylor](#)

<image001.jpg>

A park employee closes a gate in California's Yosemite National Park. (David McNew/Getty Images)

When President-elect Joe Biden takes office next month, one of his first challenges will be the nearly 2 million member federal workforce. Morale is down in many agencies after four years of attacks on the civil service from President Trump.

Trump has called the federal workforce the "deep state." His administration has moved hundreds of jobs out of Washington, D.C. There was a hiring freeze, a government shutdown and job cuts in some agencies.

Max Stier, president of the nonpartisan Partnership For Public Service, says the actions and rhetoric by the president have taken their toll on the federal work force.

"There's no question that the Trump administration has diminished the value of civil service or public service for many agencies," Stier tells NPR. "And you can see that just in the morale scores of those agencies themselves."

Of the 17 largest federal agencies listed in the Partnership's [Best Places to Work](#) survey, morale in 2019 was down from the previous year at 10 of them.

The federal work force has other issues. For example, federal workers tend to be lot older than workers in the private sector, says Donald Kettl, a professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas.

"Six point two percent of federal employees are under the age of 30. In the U.S. workforce as a whole, it's 24%. So that there's a huge gap, and the federal government has been actually doing a really poor job of bringing new blood in," Kettl says.

Plus, getting hired is a long and often arduous process. Kettl says it takes some 90 days for the government to hire someone, and the [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) website, which applicants must use, can be difficult to negotiate.

Kettl teaches a course in public management and says that for many students who are interested in trying to make an impact through the federal service, "simply trying to find a way to negotiate that path is extraordinarily difficult."

Some of those students are interested in public service, but not with the federal government.

Emma Israel, who plans to graduate next spring, wants to work on immigration issues, but probably will look for work at a nonprofit. She's not interested in a position at the Department of Homeland Security, which deals with immigration issues.

DHS, she says, "has been a department, that in my opinion anyway, that the administration has really used for political purposes and has gotten sort of an even worse reputation than it had before the Trump presidency."

Kelsey Wingo, another of Kettl's grad students, is interested in disaster and climate resilience but doesn't think the federal government is the best place to affect change.

"There are other sectors in the world that are moving a bit quicker or are just prioritizing really impactful solutions as opposed to kind of getting stuck in these bureaucracies that I think of when I think of the federal government," Wingo says.

Pay is another issue, especially on low-level jobs. Chad Hooper, a former IRS manager who now heads the Professional Managers Association, says he had difficulty recruiting for some positions because the requirements were higher than for competing and better-paying jobs in the private sector.

What's more, he says, prospective employees "find out right when you join that you have this 5% mandatory retirement contribution. So the take-home pay that you are expecting is actually quite a bit less."

Hooper says that hiring and pay freezes, the elimination of employee recognition programs and the elimination of tuition reimbursement programs "all together make a very poor situation for staff."

Convincing someone to work for the federal government can be "a tough sell," says Traci DiMartini, who is the chief human capital officer at the General Services Administration. But she says not everyone is deterred. Through the end of November this year, the GSA posted some 1,300 job listings.

"For that, we received over 66,000 applications, which means we're only hiring 2% of the people that applied," DiMartini says.

Across the whole federal government, according to the Office of Personnel Management, there were more than 18 million applicants for some 331,000 federal job postings this year.

OPM spokeswoman Rachel Tripp said in a statement to NPR: "Because of the President's vision, the swamp is actively being drained and in doing so, Americans around the country — outside of Washington, DC — who would never have had the chance to serve in the Federal Government now do."

The majority of federal jobs are, however, already located outside Washington, D.C.

At the GSA, DiMartini says agencies like hers are trying to find new ways of reaching out to prospective employees through social media platforms, including LinkedIn and Facebook. "We want to reach out to the workforce that would prefer to apply for jobs over the phone rather than sitting in front of their computer," she says.

So far, figures show there's been no spike in new applicants because of the upcoming change in administrations. And DiMartini says despite the challenges, in tough economic times such as these, "people want to work for the federal government no matter who is in charge."